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IMAN (TRUE FAITH)

Definition of Iman

[1] Linguistically, *Iman* means to be convinced, to accept in the heart the information of the informer, to give your heart over to something or to submit to something.

[2] Technically*, Iman* is defined in the Hadith of Jibril (as) who came towards the end of the Prophet's life (saw) and asked him, "What is *Iman*?" and Allah's Messenger (saw) replied, **"*Iman* is that you believe in Allah, His angels, His scriptures, His messengers, the Last Day, and that you believe in destiny, the good and bad of it"** (Muslim).

[3] The questions were basic; sometimes when delved into something deeply, it is good to step back and put everything into perspective – and this is what the Hadith of Jibril (as) is doing.

[4] After this incident occurred, the Prophet (saw) didn't mention each pillar every instance. For example, he would say, **"Whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day"** and leave out everything else, as it is assumed he will believe in all – all *hadith* need to be viewed in light of others.

[5] *Iman* is all about belief in the heart; it is not an outward action or deed.

Iman, Islam and Deen

[1] It is possible to have *Iman* without *Islam* because we can have faith in the heart but can't express this faith maybe due to duress or fear.

[2] Somebody can perform the physical acts – such as outwardly praying or fasting – but have no *Iman*. This is called hypocrisy (*nifaq*).

[3] For *Iman* to be valid, *Islam* and *Iman* need to come together. *Islam* and *Iman* are like the back and stomach; you can't have a stomach without back and a back without a stomach.

[4] Allah (swt) says, **"The desert Arabs say, 'We have faith.' [Prophet], tell them, 'You do not have faith. What you should say instead is, "We have submitted," for faith has not yet entered your hearts."**(Qur'an 49:14). Allah (swt) says, tell them don't say *"amanna",* say *"aslamna"* because the proper *Iman* and conviction is not there.

[5] There are certain actions that come due to *Iman* in your heart and certain actions that come due to the absence of *Iman* in your heart. If someone doesn't pay *zakat* but they believe in it, it is not disbelief; however, if they reject it, they are disbelievers. Actions are the manifestations of the faith inside but not in definition because there are two levels. The basic faith of a person is to affirm with the tongue, but if *Iman* is weak, actions are not there.

[6] Affirmation of the tongue is an external manifestation of your faith.

[7] *Deen* means anything you adopt as a religion. Generally, terms are used interchangeably. For example, the word *Deen* is also used for the Day of Judgment and also used to indicate *Iman* ("he is on the *Deen"* or "he has faith"). What *Deen* really means is explained by Imam Abu Hanifah who says, **"Din is a noun that encompasses Iman, Islam and all Sacred Laws."**

Increase and Decrease of Iman

[1] The group that argue that *Iman* does not increase or decrease look at it very technically. They say that *Iman* is all of the tenets of faith and that *Iman* is a single entity. However, they do agree that during the time of the Prophet (saw) *Iman* increased when a new law came, as they now believed in this additional statement or tenet.

[2] The second group say *Iman* does increase and decrease based on the exclusion and inclusion of deeds. The critical problem here is that the less good deeds we do, it will slowly eat away at this, and thus *Iman* can be lost.

[3] According to a majority of *ulama*, there is no real difference on this; they are just semantic differences.

Conditions and Integrals of Iman

[1] The majority of the *ulama* say conviction of the heart is an integral of *Iman*, and affirmation of the tongue is a condition.

[2] If one is called to affirm their faith verbally and there is no reason not to, it's an invalid excuse. If one cannot confess and affirm their faith, we can't say they are Muslim; we are only responsible by judging their outward act. They can be Muslim with Allah (swt) but not with the people. If you want to be treated as a believer and be part of the *Ummah*, you have to affirm your faith.

[3] Some *ulama* say, a person who has faith in their heart, does not affirm their faith verbally and is not under duress or severe fear, is a *kafir*.

[4] A person who cannot affirm their faith with the tongue proves they don't have enough conviction to supersede their goals, desires and dreams.

The Position of Other Groups

[1] The *Murji'ah* say that *Iman* is simply only conviction of the heart and that actions are not necessary but just adornments. They say that it doesn't make a difference if one prays or not and would still be considered a believer. *Murji'ah* is essentially anti-nominalism – like those people who say Islam is all in the heart. This is the influence of the Christians.

[2] The *Khawarij* are the opposite of *Murji'ah*. They argue that if one leaves good actions, they will be rendered a disbeliever. They tell others who don't pray or wear a scarf, for example, a *kafir* (disbeliever) or *mushrik* (polytheist).

[3] The *Mu'tazilah* (rationalists) argue that a person who commits a major sin, is neither a believer nor a disbeliever. The *Mu'tazilah* look at things in a super-intellectual way. We can't diminish intellect, but when it is taken and super-imposed over revelation, it becomes problematic.

[4] Although these groups don't exist anymore, these generic problems will always remain as they are human extremities manifested through the religion.

Kufr (Disbelief)

[1] Linguistically, *kufr* means to conceal or reject.

[2] Technically, a *kafir* is a person who negates anything that is established definitively in the Qur'an and mass transmitted narrations.

[3] Anybody who does not have *Iman* and *Islam* is called a disbeliever (*kafir*).

[4] Disbelief is the same if they disbelieve in part of the fundamentals and those established definitively. If someone denies that which is speculative *hadith* but not established definitively, we can't call them a *kafir* (disbeliever) but a *fasiq* (sinner).

Shirk (Polytheism)

[1] *Shirk* is a type of *Kufr*. It means to affirm a partner to Allah (swt). Any object of worship beyond one becomes *shirk*.

[2] *Shirk* is the worst type of oppression as you are oppressing everybody else with that.

[3] *Shirk* can be divided into two categories: major *shirk* and minor *shirk*.

[4] Types of *shirk*:

i. ***Shirk al-Istiqlal* (Shirk of the Establishment of Independent Deities) -** Attributing different deities and gods to different forces and aspects. This is like the Magians who believe in two deities: one was all good and other all bad).
ii. ***Shirk al-Tab'id* (Shirk of Composition) -** To distribute and make God an element of a composition. This refers to the Christians who believe in the Trinity.
iii. ***Shirk al-Taqrib* (Shirk of Agents or Intermediaries) -** Worshipping something other than Allah (swt) as you feel you can't get to God directly. This is like the Makkans who believed they had to go through idols to get to Allah (swt).
iv. ***Shirk al-Taqlid* (Shirk of Blind-following) -** To worship other than Allah (swt) purely out of conviction and bias in following forefathers, friends etc. This is like the people of Makkah.

v. ***Shirk al-Asbab*** **(Shirk of Means):** When you attribute the efficacy of an item not to Allah (swt), but the item itself or something other than Allah (knife cuts, fire burn, diamond glitters etc.) There is an extreme and non-extreme level to this: (1) Extreme level (major *shirk*): the fire had nothing to do with God; God created fire and gave it the efficacy of it burning and Allah (swt) no longer has part in it, (2) Non-extreme level (minor shirk): God created it and made it independent – this is still critical. *Ahl al-Sunnah* believe that Allah (swt) occasions every single instant.

vi. ***Shirk al-Aghrad*** **(Shirk of Motivation):** Doing an act for other than Allah (swt), such as for praise, position, ulterior motive of gaining wealth or anything of that nature. When we do an act of worship to show others, this is minor *shirk* because we're adding an additional element and our worship is not directed to Allah (swt) alone. Minor *shirk* is not disbelief but it can become a major *shirk* –such as praying to show off.